

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants wish to express their gratitude to the Examiner for the courtesies extended in conducting an Examiner Interview on November 20, 2003, with Applicants' attorneys, Pierre R. Yanney and Richard J. Katz. During the interview, claim 1 was discussed with respect to U.S. Patent No. 6,020,884 to MacNaughton et al. ("MacNaughton"). This RCE is being filed to expand upon the substance of the Examiner Interview, while addressing each specific rejection of the claims.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-15 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 5, 6, 9-11, 13 and 14 have been amended. Claim 15 has been added. No new matter is added.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3 and 5-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by MacNaughton. The Examiner contends that MacNaughton discloses each and every element of claim 1 including the feature of a semi-public chat session.

Applicants submit that MacNaughton discloses that users who share similar interests may learn of one another and communicate with one another through a variety of options

including engaging in real-time chat sessions. (MacNaughton, column 9, lines 44-48.) MacNaughton discloses the core capabilities of “‘Chat’ (real time interactions with other community members) and ‘Invitations’ (messages from one community member to another to chat).” (MacNaughton, column 10, lines 12-15.) The Chat function can allow a user to view a “list of associated public chat rooms, [and] enter into private and public chat sessions.” (MacNaughton, column 10, lines 26-27.)

Amended claim 1 recites the steps of “receiving, from the first user, a request to open a semi-public chat session with the second user; transmitting, to the second user, an indication that the first user has requested the semi-public chat session; receiving, from the second user, an acceptance to enter the semi-public chat session; and at least one of the first user and the second user designating the semi-public chat session selectively visible.” In contrast, MacNaughton discloses only public chat sessions and private chat sessions, MacNaughton discloses neither as being made selectively visible by a user’s designation. Applicants submit that MacNaughton does not disclose a semi-public chat session, which is a chat session that is designated as selectively visible by a user. Therefore, Applicants submit that MacNaughton does not disclose each and every feature of amended claim 1. Thus, Applicants submit that MacNaughton does not anticipate claim amended 1.

Independent claims 5, 9-11, 13 and 14 have been amended in a like manner to recite the features of a semi-public chat session and users designating the semi-public chat session

as selectively visible. Applicants submit that claims 5, 9-11, 13 and 14 are patentable over MacNaughton for reasons similar to those discussed for claim 1.

Claims 2-3 depend from claim 1, and Applicants submit that claims 2-3 are patentable over MacNaughton for at least the same reasons as claim 1. Claims 6-8 depend from claim 5, and Applicants submit that claims 6-8 are patentable over MacNaughton for at least the same reasons as claim 5. Claim 12 depends from claim 11, and Applicants submit that claim 12 is patentable over MacNaughton for at least the same reasons as claim 11.

Withdrawal and reconsideration of the rejection is requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 4-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over MacNaughton. Claim 4 depends from claim 1, and Applicants have submitted that claim 1 is patentable over MacNaughton for at least the foregoing reasons. Therefore, Applicants submit that claim 4 is patentable over MacNaughton for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claims 6-8 depend from claim 5, and Applicants have submitted that claim 5 is patentable over MacNaughton for at least the foregoing reasons. Therefore, Applicants submit that claims 6-8 are patentable over MacNaughton for at least the same reasons as claim 5. Applicant submits that claims 9 and 10 are patentable over MacNaughton for the foregoing reasons discussed above.

Withdrawal and reconsideration of the rejection is requested.

CONCLUSION

Each and every point raised in the Office Action dated September 25, 2003 has been addressed on the basis of the above remarks. In view of the foregoing it is believed that claims 1-15 are in condition for allowance and it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered and that all pending claims be allowed and the case passed to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

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Respectfully submitted,

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